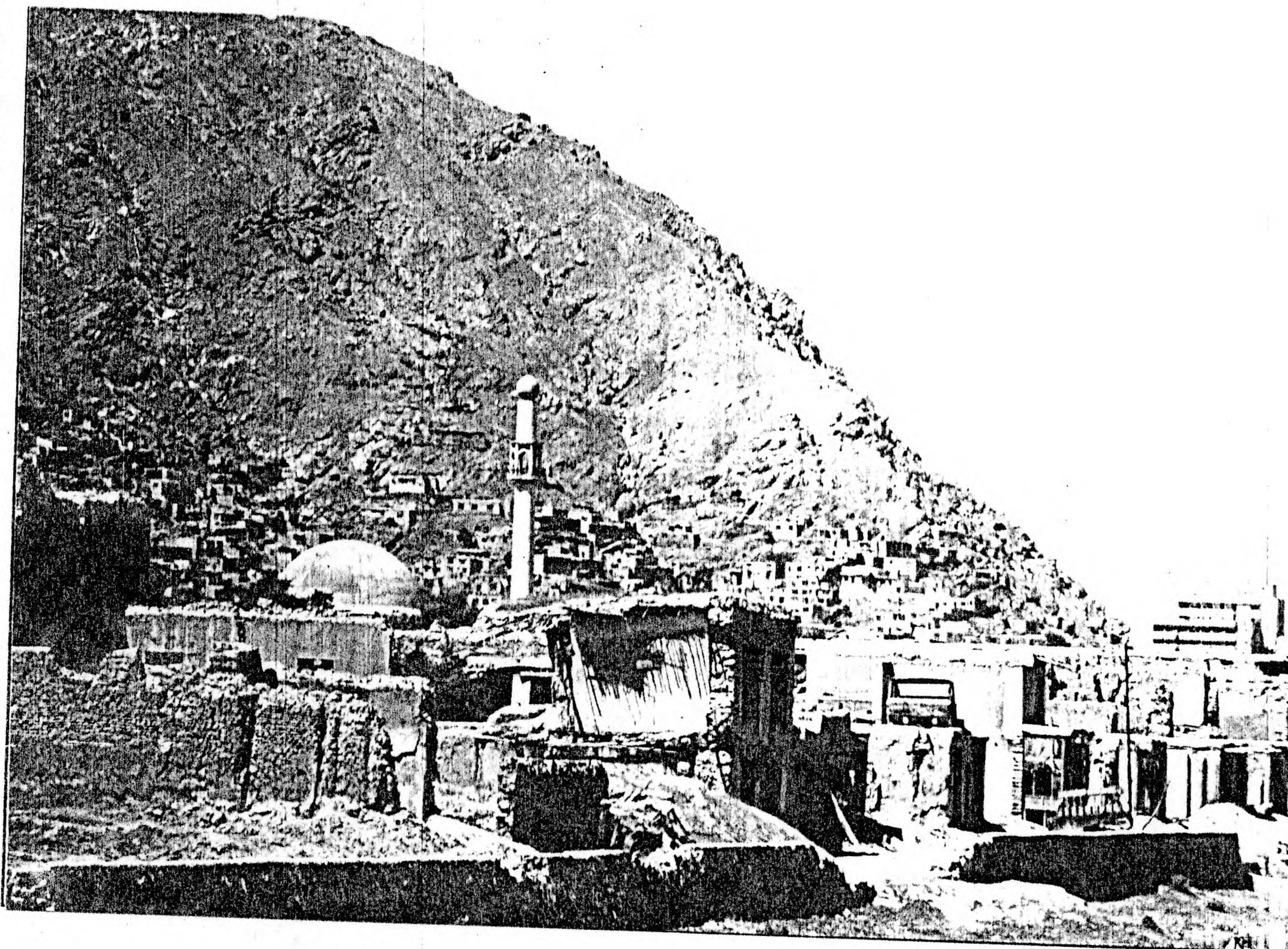
Air travel to Kabul and major provinces as well as postal and parcel service is carried by ICRC planes including a 2 page daily news which comes out around 10 O'clock.

You don't have to wait for city buses because the body of 500 of them are laying in Begrami desert and some 400 trolley buses are in comma in front of the late Silo Central Bakery, the largest building in Afghanistan.



Kabul rests in peace

Get a bike and feel as the king of the road because the capital is in emergency room.

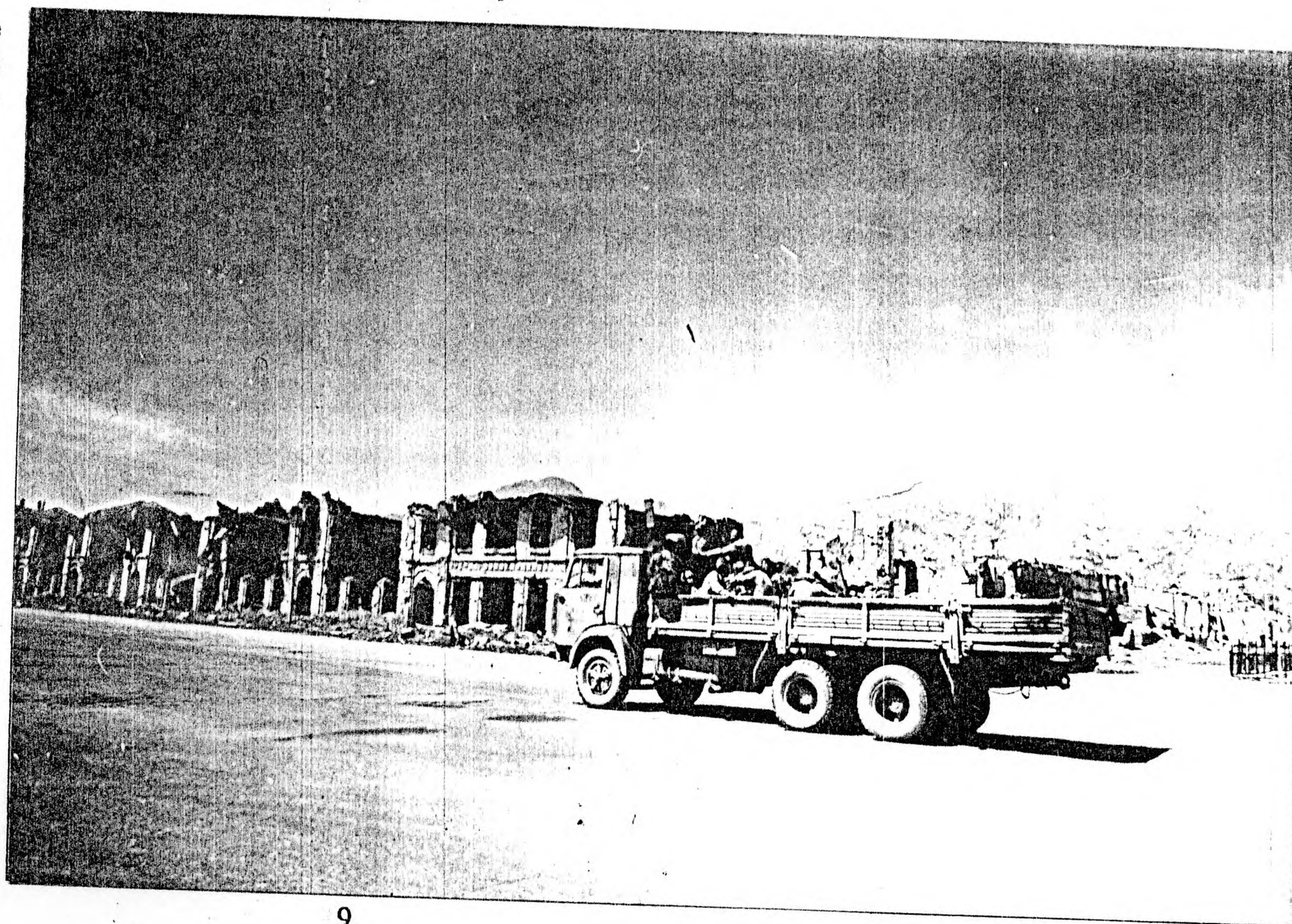
And if you have a song, whisper it silently because the capital is in emergency room.

But if you want to cry, don't do it!. Weep quietly!

Because you know that:

THE CAPITAL IS IN EMERGENCY ROOM.

Full security established !



HOPE



Leaving the gloomy urban centers, soon visitors begin to develop a happier mood as they approach the urban areas. Afghan villages are growing green with happy children running around.

Life, the needs and means of sustenance are much simple in the villages. Here, every one in the family is active every day either in production of food or raising livestock or gathering wood, animal dung or dry bushes for fuel. Villagers are mostly food producers collectors Logar in blossomwhere city dwellers are mostly consumers

In the village eventhe medicine they need also are collected from among various wild bushes and plants. Villager do not pay money for taxi , telephone electricity, groceries, tailors, barbers, masons, carpenters teachers ,tariff & customs, engineers, mechanics, designers, plumbers, shopkeepers ,tailors, beauticians, doctors, servicemen, janitors and so forth. Why? Because they do all these things themselves.

Instead they give food tevery one. Food for themselves, their guests, and plants. There are legends that in one village people give green fodder for the first car which had visited their village at the beginning of the 20 century andwere surprised that stupid cars prefer gasoline better than green grass.



In the villages people don't know politics much. In fact politics to them has been violence, war and destruction. Government officials always have been treated as outsiders who always want and never give but trouble.



Instead they like the clouds, the sun , the moon, the lightening and the winds, because all of them bring tangible changes to their life. Clouds bring rain and water to their streams and fields, the sun gives them light heat and help the growth of their plants and ripening of their fruits, the moon keep their dark nights bright so they don't fell into ditches.

They call rain in the village as the mercy of God to man to animals and to the plants. While for the city dwellers the same day is called an other filthy wet day.

As city dwellers try to fight the sun with umbrellas, fans, air conditioners, freezers and refrigerators, to villagers sun is an other mercy of God without which flowers couldn't blossom.d fruits never become ripen and sweet. They love sun because they say it keeps us warm while working outside in field and without it there would be ice all over and every thing would freeze. Without sun there would be always dark, nights and day and nothing can move. Flowers become ugly, birds stop singing and honey bees frozen. Honey bees sleep at nights and they come only when the sun shines and the flowers blossom.

A wheat farm in Incho Parwan March 1996

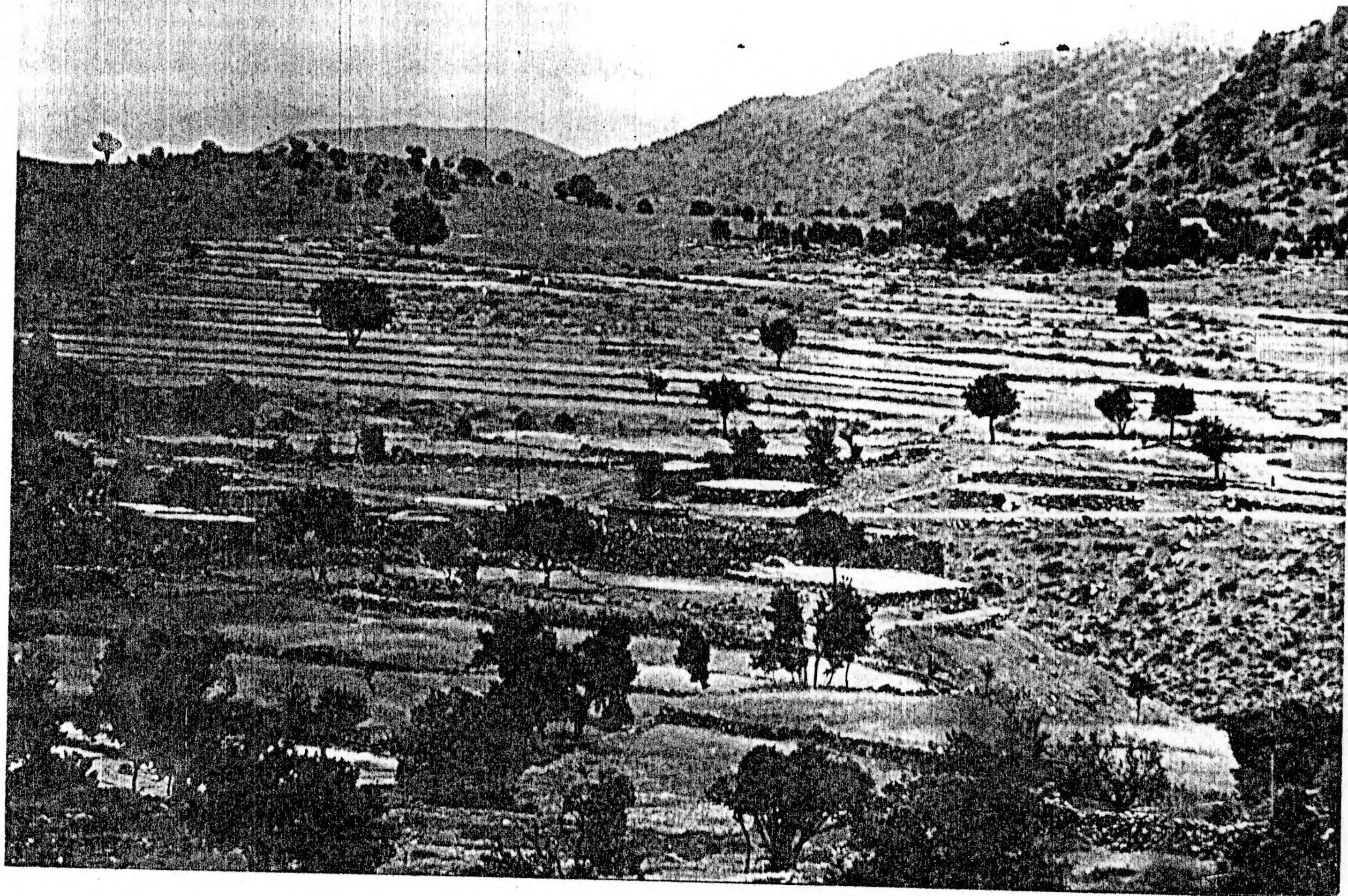


The Genius Farmers

Only 8 % of the land in Afghanistan is under cultivation. This has posed a big challenge to Afghan farmers to make maximum use of the land available. The remaining area is covered by mostly mountain ranges as well as barn deserts. Only a small portion of Afghanistan land is covered by forests. The generally dry character of country's climate has made irrigation an essential part of farming in Afghanistan. Thus small flat lands in the banks of rivers from ancient times has attracted the people . Most of Afghan cities were established first inn the bank of rivers which served as source of water for drinking and irrigation.

Through digging open and under ground channels Afghan farmers along the history have developed variety of channels to take water to relatively distant areas. However this effort can facilitated small villages and is not sufficient to respond to the growing needs of growing population of large villages and towns of Afghanistan .

Land without water is plenty and governments in peace times were able to extend larger canals to bigger fields and reclaim new arable lands.



Tanai valley

The irrigation canals of Shamalan, Marja and Nadali canals on Helmand river, the Irrigation Project Of Parwan the irrigation canals of Hadda and Ghaziabad in Nangarhar province are some of the successful achievements to this end . However little use of this nature has been made of Amu and Harirud rivers , both of which originate in Afghanistan and leave the country with out major contribution to the Afghan territory. Afghans would go bizarre once they see what magic these tow rivers have made once entering the deserts of former Soviet Union .

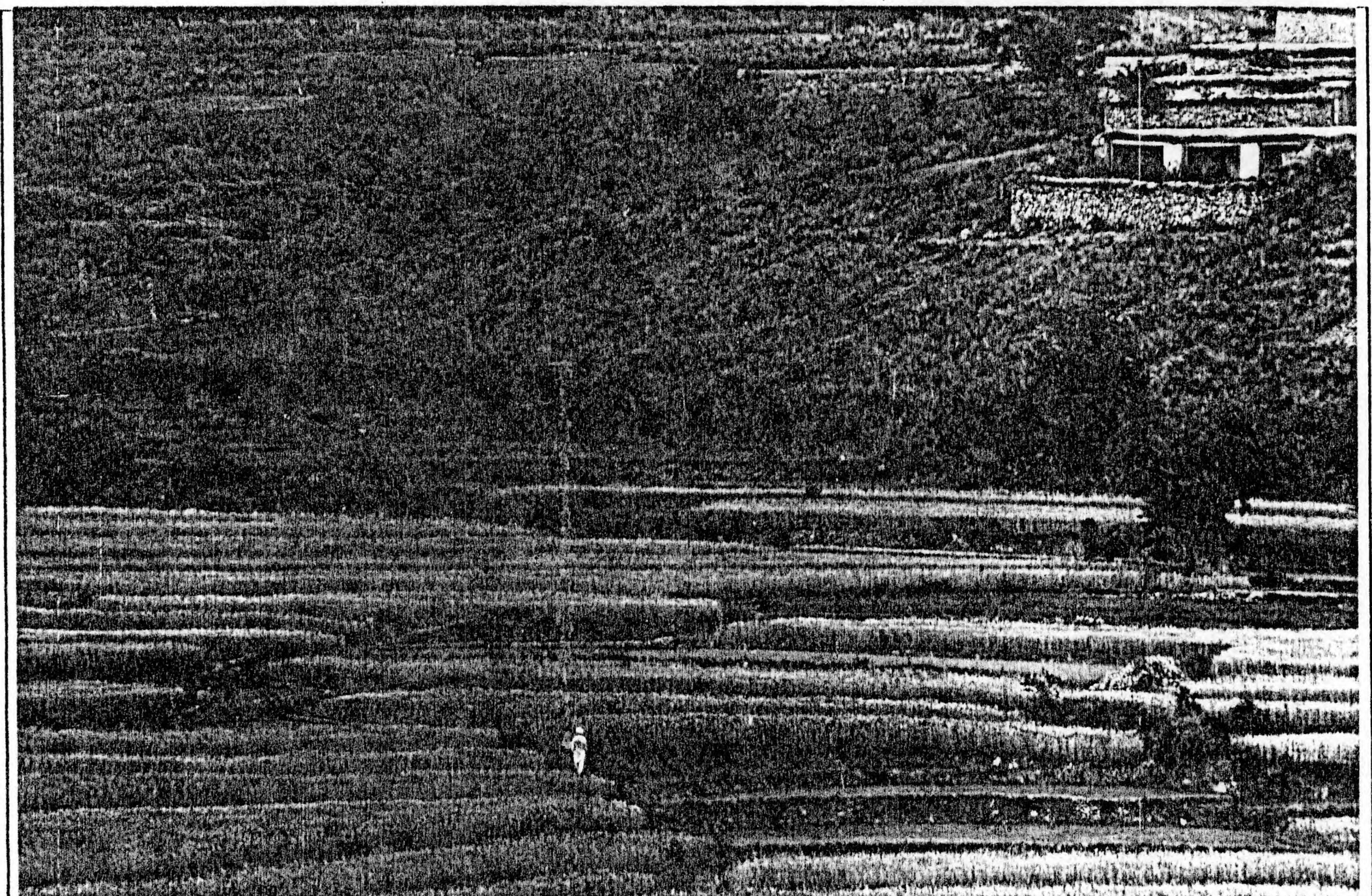
Visiting various valleys of Afghanistan one can see the tremendous effort of the local communities in taming wild lands and making them suitable for man meeting their needs. In the photo above a village in Tanai county of Khost province is solely depending on rain waters which is seasonal and for most part of the year villagers have to go to the mountain to bring some water from springs located miles away toward the top of the mountain. In 1996 CARE international decided to bring the spring from the mountain to this village through extension of 1000 meter pipe and building a large village reservoir. This supplied the 800 inhabitants of the village with 24 hour clean water for drinking, washing cooking rescuing their animals from life long thirst. Otherwise half of the activities of

each family was to go to the mountain for 2 hours and bring water which was not enough.Digging Karez underground water channels is a traditional system of water supply in most villages of Afghanistan. How ever it is only applicable in soft soils but not rocky soils like Tanai county.Not only the tools techniques and equipment developed by Afghan farmers are fascinating but also their awareness of the climate changes, selection of suitable fruits, trees, plants and variety of grains and vegetables in particular valleys are some of the richest part of Afghan culture which make a thorough visit a genuine exploration of undiscovered mysteries of human communities.

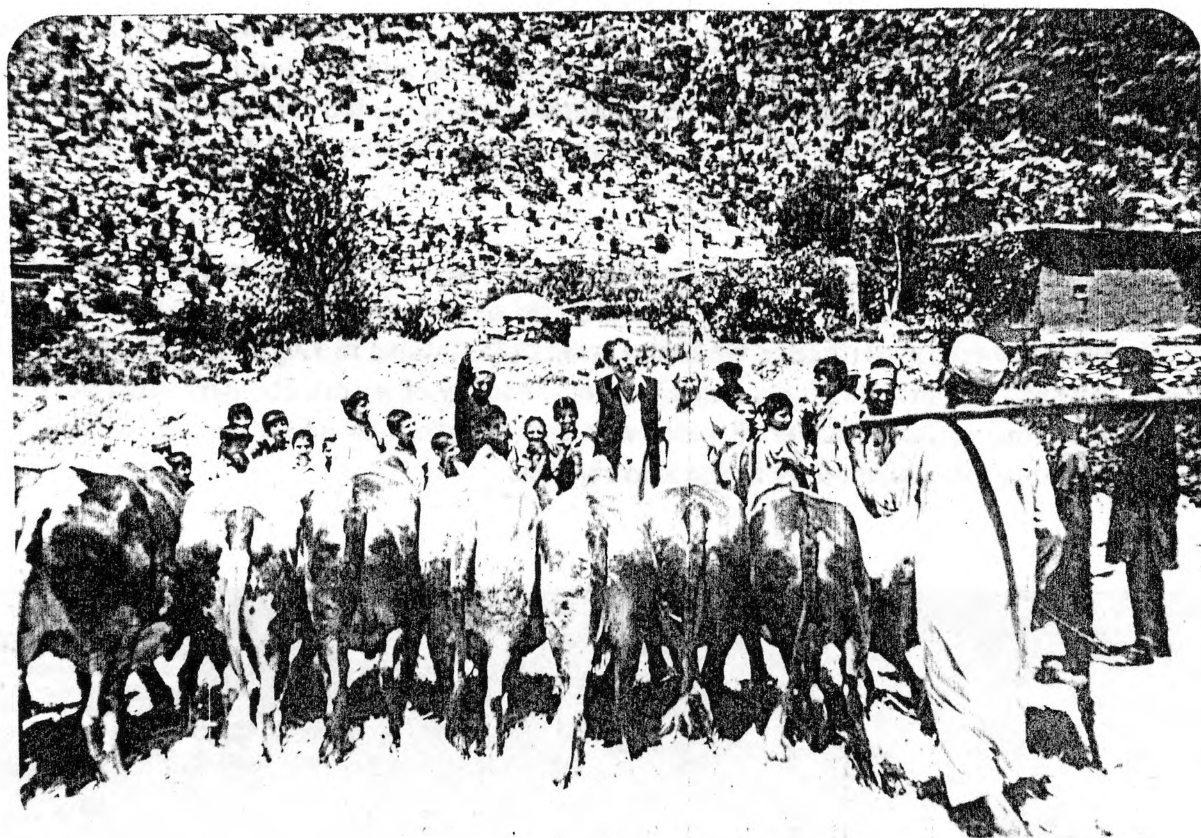
Realizing the degree of local knowledge and capacities in identifying and addressing a given problem is an essential part of community rehabilitation. Because each village enjoy a special level of technology, environmental awareness and skills which makes the sustenance system or mechanism of the given village , some thing which must not be neglected or underestimated.

Introduction of a changes or new methods and technologies either by government institutions or non-government organizations must keenly observe these baseline if they aim genuine success and development. The photo bellow show wheat plantation in Kaskai village of Jaji Maidan . This plantations is irrigated from the diversion dam that CARE built 50 meters above on the top of the hill. The dam also curbs flooding and the sever erosion of the farmlands below.

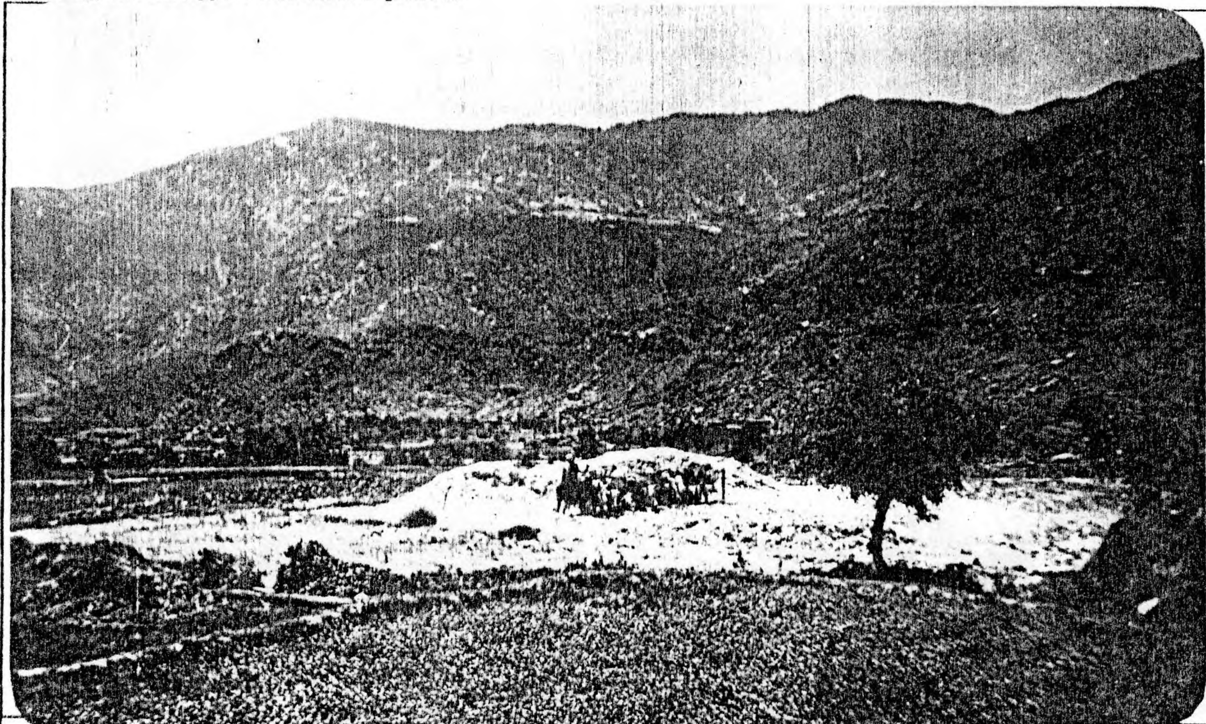
The author spent a whole day visiting the projects and chatting with people in Kaskai in April 1996. It worth mentioning that the wheat plantation of Kaskai had the least amount of parasite plants and where all from the improved seeds variety. In the same trip a week later we found wheat plantations in Logar and Parwan provinces which were predominantly covered by parasite plants and using local variety of wheat. Readers must bear in mind that the 2 latter provinces have not rested from the 18 years war and are strongly under served by International aid community due to non-stop insecurity prevailing in the said regions.



Kaskay Village , Jajimaidan



Kunar a mountainous region and 2nd forest zone of Afghanistan receives plenty of rain but has little flat land for cultivation. Thus lumber business and animal husbandry has become the predominant means of sustenance leaving farming to the third place.



Kunar has received little institutional support even in peace times and as major stronghold of resistance forces was categorically shattered by the air raids during Soviet occupation. The puppet regimes then even used SKUD messiles against Assadabad the capital of Kunar in order to make it succumb to alien rule>. But Kunar remained persistent till it became the first province liberated.

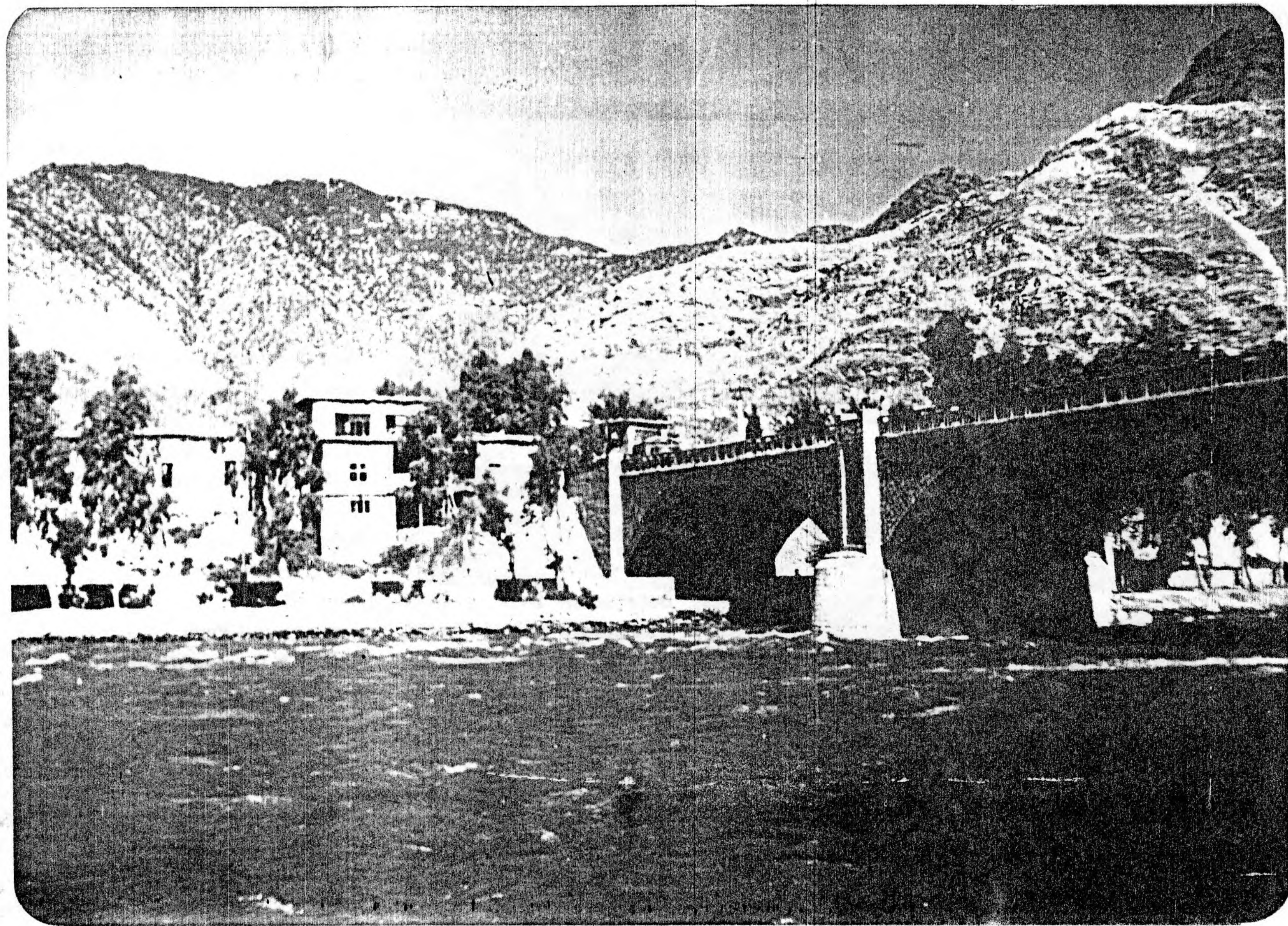


The author visited Shegal, Morawara and Pech counties Kunar province (1995) in the farm work of an external evaluation mission studying the impact of EU funded (Afghan Village Assistance Program AVAP) implemented by CARE in 1992/94 . Kunar had the highest ratio of refugee due to intensity of the frequent air and ground attacks and 80% of its houses and buildings were destroyed. Thus AVAP's main mandate was to:-



Help rehabilitation of the infrastructure - Pave the way for repatriation of returnees - Insure food security for returnees through Food For Work in road building ,canal cleaning and other public services.

The fresh air filled with the fragrance of Oke trees and Alfa alfa flower in various valleys of Kunar made



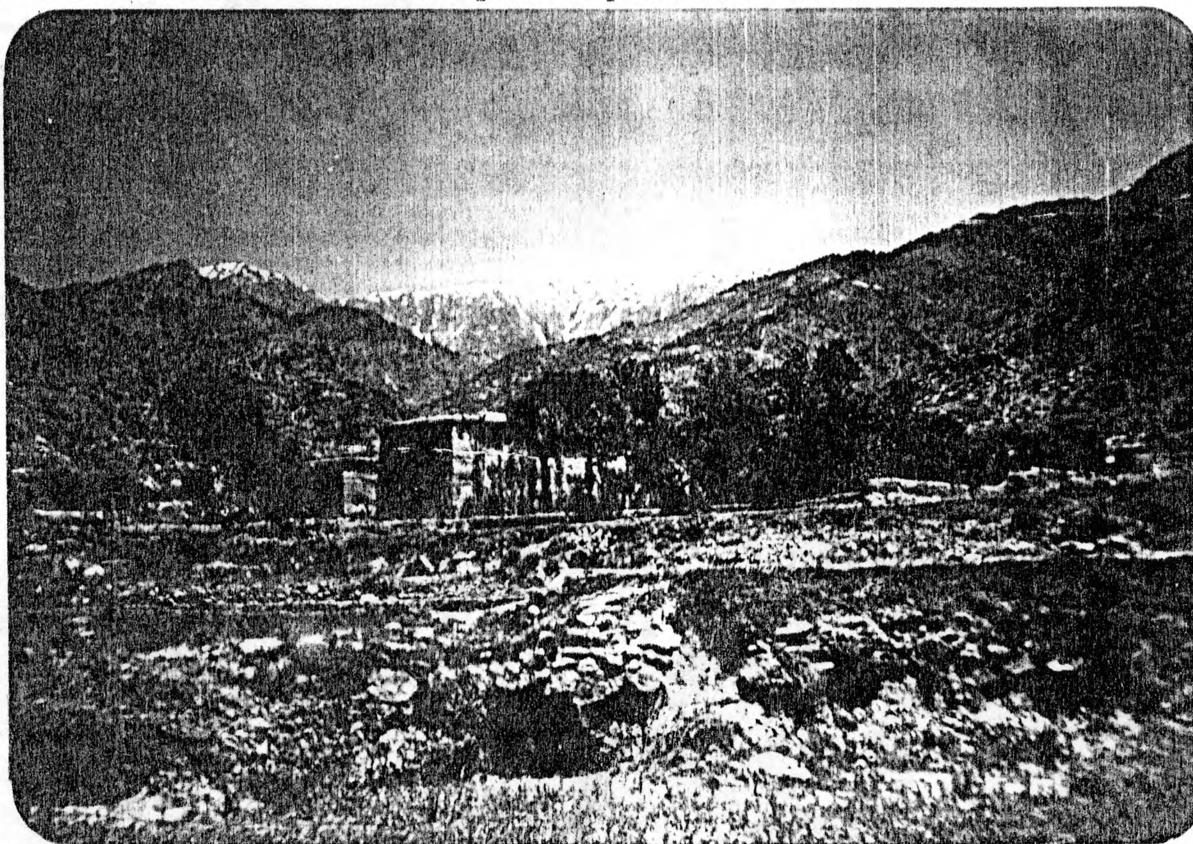
the one week visit of the mission a journey to paradise. One has to confess that the high precipitation of Kunar affected by Monsoon climate has given an exceptional beauty to the green valleys surrounded by tree covered mountains.

However the contribution of Kunar farmers: the terraced fields of rice, wheat, alpha, and corn, the colorful clothing of the villagers and their healthy looking animals in the presence of zero pollution, has turned each newly built house in Kunar into a pavilion of freedom fighters. The determination of Bissmila Khan , a farmer of Burkandai village in Pech county and a former commander of Mujahiddin made our interview an unforgettable experience in Kunar. According to Bissmila Khan:

It is time for the Afghans to appreciate our gains against foreign intruder.
We need to rebuild the land which we fought so fiercely for its liberation.

Bellow is the house of Bissmilla Khan who leads an extended family. He has rebuilt the house because their previous house was shattered during Russian bombardments. Commenting on the problems of Kunar farmers Bissmila Khan says:

You see, we are surrounded by high mountains and when it rains the water takes all the good soil (which is very little) to the river. This means that need in Kunar tot protect the good soil before dreaming of any cultivation work. There is no flat land around . We have to first build flat land in terrace form and then plant trees and bushes around it to protect the soil from being washed when it rains and then one can decide what to cultivate and expect some harvest.



Behind his house is the snow capped Hindukush mountain which sends cool air and fresh water to the whole province. Looking at the trees up in the mountain Bissmila Khan stresses apprehension over the non-discriminate tree cuttings and smuggling that goes on in Kunar. He says:

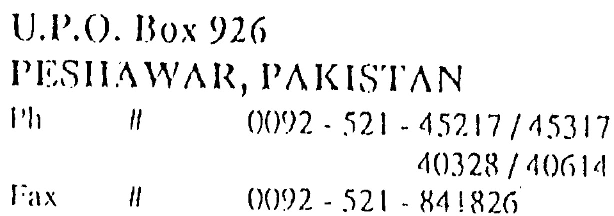
Destruction is easy ! But to build some thing takes years!
I wander what will those people do when all the trees are gone?

As a forest region I found no wood craft program neither by CARE nor by other NGOs which would have helped so that the lumber be processed in Kunar and create jobs to many land less population of the province too.
Also contrary to the information fed in those days about Kunar I found no poppy plantation even on small scale in the three major counties of Kunar visited in 1995. While in the same trip our team saw poppy farms by the paved road in Nangarhar even in Ghaziabad state farm. This factor inquire that Kunar farmers deserve encouraging support by international aid community as incentive for refraining from cultivation of elicit crops which has become predominant in some other southern provinces.




صدیقی

CARE
AFGHANISTAN



U.P.O. Box 926
PESHAWAR, PAKISTAN
Ph # 0092 - 521 - 45217 / 45317
40328 / 40614
Fax # 0092 - 521 - 841826

Sunday, 14 July 1996

To whom it may concern,

This is to affirm that Gholam Ahmad Eqbal served as the head of CARE Afghanistan's Monitoring and Evaluation Unit from 1 April 1995 through 15 July 1996. Eqbal also oversaw the media and publications activities of the mission and translated a number of documents from English into Dari.

Eqbal's departure from CARE is as a result of budget reductions and a restructuring exercise which eliminated the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit.

During his tenure with CARE Eqbal repeatedly demonstrated his empathy for the sufferings endured by the disabled and disenfranchised in Afghanistan and his desire to make their plight known to the broader world.

We wish Eqbal well with the openings which the future will bring.

Sincerely,

Paul Barker
Director/CARE Afghanistan

KUCHIS :
The Honey Bee Colonies of Afghanistan

If any of tribes claim that they own all the non-inhibited land between Auxus and Indus rivers , it must be the Kuchis of Afghanistan.



For many settled population of Afghanistan the greening of mountain hills in 3 months of spring season make not much difference. Because they are short lived and appears as a change of color when the hot and dry summer months come.

But , for the Kuchi families these greening of mountain hills make a big difference and means a lot. Because they also know when the grasses of one hill becomes yellow an other one has just turned green may be just

At the on the other side of the mountain or a little bit farther in the North. Kuchi camp in Desabs Plain Kabul province Given the Monsoon and Alpine character of the climates affecting the territory between Sind and Amu rivers, they discovered that there is always plenty of green hills along the rout they travel in different seasons of the year. Green grasses for Kuchis ensure availability of plenty of food for their herds and nice and comfortable weather for their families to travel. In other words Kuchi families and their herds never get stuck with sever winters of Hindukush plains or the burning temperature of Monsoon regions. Actually the Kuchi families chase spring season all through the year. By doing his they acquire access to vast pastures extended all the way from Auxus to Sind . Thus Kuchis are the herders who do not have to pay a penny for feeding their herds, or maintenance of their pastures. Kuchi herds and their by-products (wool, milk, meat) grow three times larger every year and so does their local trade with settlers of the towns and villages located along their course of travel.

To the settled population , Kuchi families look like migratory bird which have not a home to live and are wandering all year long and all through their lives. Some even pitifully call them : look the poor Kuchi families have returned again they are roaming and roaming .God knows when would they become settled if it ever happens.

However for Kuchi families those settled in one spot look like still waters which will go rotten sooner or later . Or they appear like trees which either will be eaten by goats or cut by an other man someday. Meanwhile settlers regard the Kuchis as good partners as they help them in harvest an in doing some local trade. They appreciate the fact that with the coming of Kuchis they can buy plenty of milk, wool and meat for cheaper price as compared with the seasons that the Kuchis disappear. Kuchis life is not that glossy as it looks ! God knows how many snakes they see, kill or get bitten by, each year.


قالین فروشی

How many Kuchi children have fallen off cliffs or die of scorpion and black widows' bits. Who take them to hospital if they have an appendix case up in the top of a mountain . What about the Kuchi expecting mothers who deliver their babies while hiking mountain passes. However no other factors have caused heavier losses and casualties among nomad tribes as much as the mine fields planted along their rout during the years of Soviet Invasion . No one has counted how many Kuchi children,



family members and animals have been blasted by these man made catastrophesbecause Kuchis livemostly beyond the institutional servicesand records. Meanwhile no one can deny that the Kuchi families and their herds have been the most active and effective informal local partners of mine clearance campaign in Afghanistan regardless of the costs and losses sustained.

Thus, while making honey for themselves the Kuchis help others prosper too . This being the on going realities about Kuchis style of life, problems and prospects one should consider that :



Is it easy to be a Kuchi ?

Is it easy to be the owner of non-settled areas lying between Auxus and Indus ?



Easy To Conquer But Hard To Rule !

Afghanistan today, suffering from a defect geo-political location has served all along her history as highway of conquests. The foot-prints of ,Greek (4th century BC),Arab (7th Century AD), Mongols (11th Century), British (19th Century), and subsequently Soviet Communist invaders (late 20th century) are still visible in various volleys of this mountainous country located in the middle of Asia.

Bloodshed, ruins ,big cemeteries ,and disgusted feeling of invaders up on withdrawal have been the common out put of these encounters. The common lesson learnt from these conquests has been that: Afghanistan is easy to conquer but impossible to rule . Interestingly enough , none of invaders bothered to learn or consider the mysterious adventure of those who had stepped there before. As a small country Afghanistan by itself has never been as the main target of grate powers neither economically nor politically. However all conquerors heading for "The Golden Bird" India, had to cross this triangle of Burmuda. It was then that fighting Afghans who know nothing but fighting , turned out always a challenge not anticipated .

The mystery in invading Afghanistan is that like honey bee colony Afghan communities never had a big standby army. For alien troops passing through less populated Afghan valleys become as easy as entering swampy land. But once the danger is felt by local inhabitants, soon it echo through out the country . It is then that every Afghan ,the old and the young, men and women rich or poor, become a fighter and the intruder gets suck finding itself as a stupid snake passing through a narrow nest of bees and scorpions . It's rugged topography , sharp climate and high headed inhabitants always have served as an un- predicted potential for resistance and survival. For example Alexander the Great who had conquered Egypt and Persian Empires in 6 months each , never anticipated to be spending 4 years in the Arena mountains and valleys.

Arab conquerors during the Amawid and Abasid Caliphates conquered many lands in Asia, Africa and Europe , however in Khorasan (the land of sunrise) the people accepted Islam but resisted Arab rule from 7th to 9th centuries. Twelve major uprisings took place against Arab rulers then.The uprisings of Abomoslem Khorasani, Naizak-i-Badghisi, Ustad Sise-i-Herawi, Tahir-I-Foshanji and Hamza-i-Sistani are among the most dramatic uprisings which after 200 years of resistance finally led to emergence of independent states of the Tahirid Dynasty in Herat and the Safaris in Sistan.

Ganges Khan who is known as one of the world's fierce warriors lost one of his major legions led by Toli his grand son in Bamian battles. He was so disgusted that he ordered all people and animals to be massacred in Bamian. Out of an army of 16000 troops send in the Anglo-Afghan war 1879 Dr. Briden was the only survivor of British force which reached Jalalabad alive . It was then that the Durand line as the first defeat of the undefeatable super power (British Empire)became necessary to be signed in order to draw the line between Afghan territory and British colonies in the Indian Subcontinent. Soviet Communists lost 50000 men in Afghan patriotic war 1979-1989. Today every Russian citizen communist or non-communist is fully convinced that it was a fatal mistake to enter Afghanistan with force.

In post cold war Afghanistan the dilemma as rightly put by Herald Magazine Published in Pakistan March 1992 issue has been: Who really rules Afghanistan? The Jihadi leaders? No ! According to Dr.R. Marwat a Patan writer, they were hatched and received subsidies under Zia



Today a most needed multi- interest pipeline has to cross Afghanistan wither Afghan people and war lords, ruling revolving provinces agree with it or not . The need is so strong that it can not wait for the establishment of a legitimate Government or restoration of peace and normalcy in what used to be a strong and Independent state in Asia. Likewise the international companies involved are equally caucus towards the future security and accountability of the power they would deal with. Sarcastically , while all the pipeline efforts in Afghanistan have sheer economic prospects for producers, purchasers and the beneficiaries, apparently Afghanistan is paying blood and purchasing tears for the time being. Altogether one can not call this a fair deal for Afghan public. One wonders what justifications are tabled at the ECO and OIC sessions for such state of affairs in the region. As far as Afghan public opinion is concerned they yet consider it as a pipeline of tears and blood ,because it has brought them nothing else so far.

Loosing central government, today independence, national sovereignty ,and territorial integrity of the country in danger. Afghanistan today is run by a number of regional commanders and all state and municipal public services are rendered by International relief organisations and NGOs. UN as the major international establishment while having the political and economic mandates for restoration of peace and economic rehabilitation refuse to treat Afghanistan as a sovereign nation not to mention as one of the founders of the UNO. Since UN has left Afghanistan 5 years ago ,one wonders if UN charters on respecting the territorial integrity of the member states are still valid in reference to Afghanistan. One also wonder if any body care in UN about the reports or recommendation of UN Special Envoy , Robert Holl , the last UN envoy to Afghanistan was finally heard on BBC in June 1997 that : *There is foreign interference in Afghanistan* . However, BBC did not say to whom the call was addressed, because there has been no responseto it sofar.



So the Cold War is Over !

This might be true for the Super Powers, but for the Afghan people who had built a small nation during 5000 years history, the out put has been nothing but devastation, mass evacuations, migrations, casualties and miseries.

The world must have forgotten what did Afghanistan look like when the Red Army Pulled out it's Troops in 1989.These photos of Parwan and Kunar villages are only a small reminder of the volume of mass destruction and devastation's that thousands of Afghan villages sustained during the decade of Russian Invasion 1979-1989.

While the astronomical funds in Ruble and Dollar for the cold war has ceased, however the in put : arsenal of sophisticated weapons still serve as the main fuel in the on going civil war in Afghanistan.



Before recovery from the wounds of the Russian Aggression, Afghanistan, the former gate to India acquired a new Geo.-political mandate as the gate to Central Asia and the Caspian oil reserves. This dilemma has turned the small tumor of the Afghan civil war to a deadly cancer . No wander why UN peace missions fail one after an other despite clear mandates issued by the UN General Assembly sessions every year.

Nevertheless, almost 2 decades of war and destruction has turned Afghanistan to a land where fighting has become the main essence of public life and the only means for sustenance second to production of poppy and revenue from heroin.

With such background and with the collapse of the central government, the bulk of Afghan population together with about 200 national and international NGOs financed mainly by European Union are pursuing one common quest: rehabilitation of war ravaged Afghanistan.



Kunar in 1989 CARE Archive

The man on the right Akamulla Khan who has lost 2 sons in the patriotic war against the Russians and 2 in the on going civil war is taking a brake under the shade of his Chapar, a local instrument for trashing wheat. He has many orphaned grand children and widows at home to feed.



Long before during Zahir Shah's reign he had several grape orchards and his raisins were sold in markets of Delhi via Peshawar. But the war and economic crises led also to the rise of wheat price on the one hand and shortage of fire wood which used to come from Paktia forests from the other, and forced Akamullah to cut his grape trees and cultivate wheat instead.

Akamulla talking about past peace times says: ***At that time I used to get 5 Sers of wheat for one Ser of my raisins in the market. But during the war the price of wheat especially in last three years went high and I had to give 2 Sers of raisons to get on Ser (7kg) wheat. I had no alternative but to give up grape for wheat. Nowadays we don't know what to do. We don't know when would peace return to Afghanistan! " Allaho Ahlam" God knows. No one care in Afghanistan. Every one is " dist-o-dan" so disparate as to put to their mouth whatever they can find. W e used to work from dawn to dusk but now our young men know only how to steal, how to loot innocent people, and take any thing with the help of their gun. It is a shame. They even don't know what is a gun for? When to fight and whom to fight.?***

Referring to Russians he stressed:



When the infidels came I took my fathers gun which he had captured from an Angrez in Amanullah Khans time. (Independence war). But today Mosolman (moslems) are fighting Mosolman, brother fights brother. Can you call this jehad ? Can you call this mardi ? I can't.

I think our men are blind and there is definitely aliens' hand. Any one with common sense know that they are making a big mistake and are commuting sins every day.

Akamullah does not know that the former role of Afghanistan as " Buffer State " is replaced by " Forward policy ". He also doesn't know that a pipeline is needed by our immediate neighbors and it has to cross Afghanistan at the soonest. Akamullah looks at the sun and gets up. He murmurs:

Well ! Every body is after their own things...

I better trash my wheat !

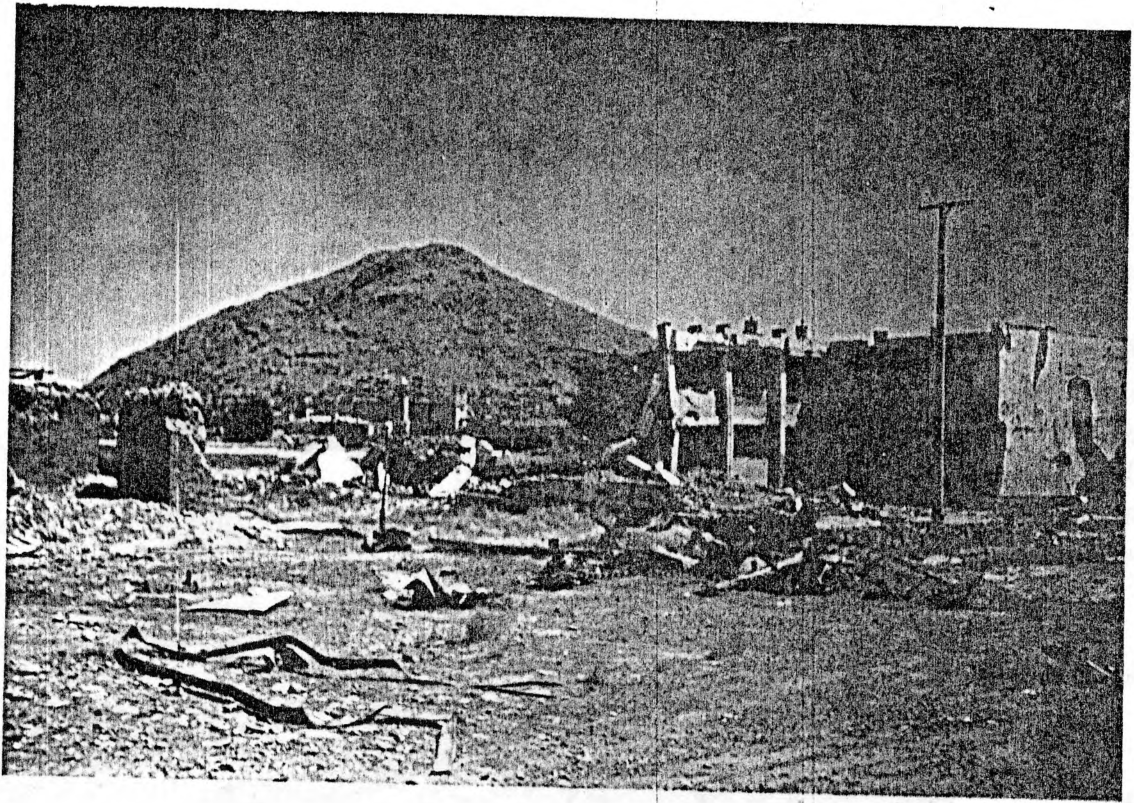


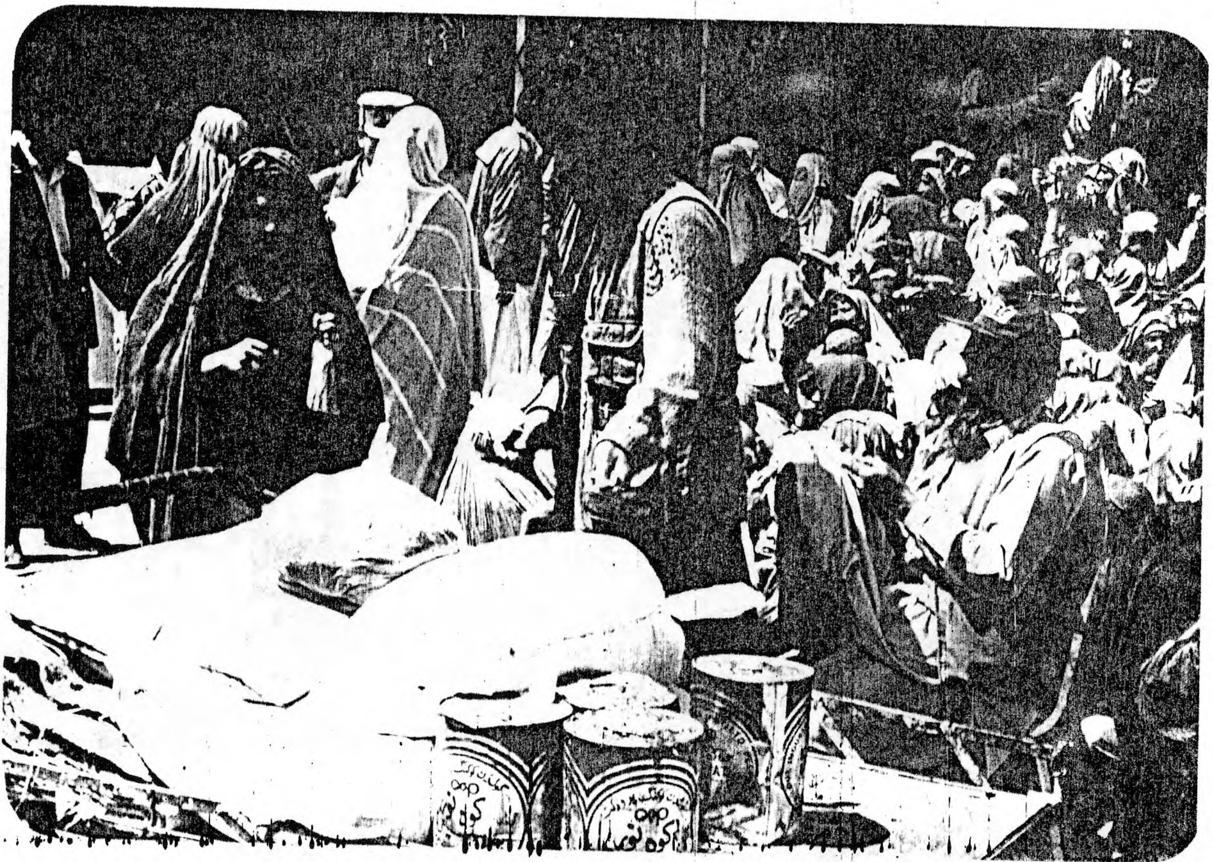
Un-controled population growth in Afghan cemeteries;

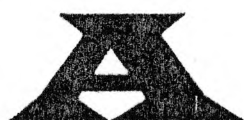
Photo : From Khaitkhana pass to Kabul airport 10 Km











A CAPITAL IN EMERGENCY ROOM

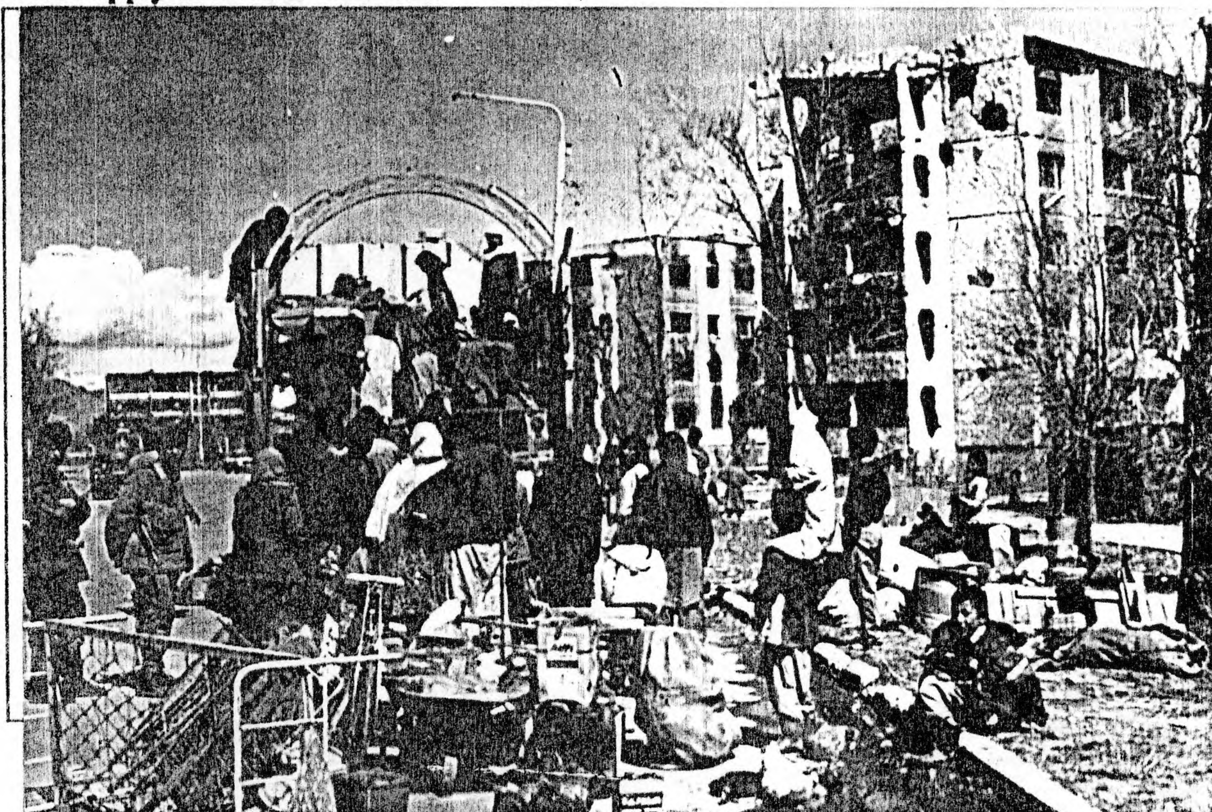


CARE covered .5000 families in 1995 Emergency program in Kabul

Kabul today is 1/4 th of what it used to be 5 years ago. Two third of the city is destroyed and most of it's population fled to neighboring provinces and countries. Great majority of it's current population are characterized as unemployed, widows, orphans, disabled and beggars who live on EMERGENCY PROGRAMS and subsidized food and no-food items donated mostly by FAO, ICRC, CARE, Solidarity, ACTED , Christian Aid, German Agro-Action MED/AIR , HELP Germany, Save the Children ,the aid committees of Nordic countries and some other charity and relief organizations. No surprise if beggars knock at doors even till 10 PM minutes before curfew time.

If you happen to be a visitor and have to eat at one of the city restaurants you will be approached by a team of beggars at the entrance and frequently while having lunch. You would need to change one Dollar which comes to (Afs. 25000) and it would save you from 50 beggars because Afs.500 is half of a bread and that is all they demand. Rumbling old Taxis not good enough for looting and NGOs' cars are the predominant cars in the city with few bumped Volgas and dirty pickups with gray flags are the ones you should be ware of wither driving or walking in the city because they supply the front and have no patience for city traffic regulation.

City hospitals are supplied with medicine and stipend by WHO and some medical NGOs. The same is happening in regards to municipal services like water supply and waste removal .



War displaced families a name created by UN to avoid being said refugees .

They are shipped by ICRC to Makroyan which was evacuated 1994/5 battles

In short you are at good hands, thanks to EU that even it wasn't that actively involved in the cold war but is paying for most part of the rehabilitation fund as well as the relief activities in Kabul.





AFGHANISTAN TODAY

An illustrated presentation of problems and prospects in Afghanistan .
Text and photos by :Eqbal



Prepared by a senior Afghan educator, writer and diplomat who has been working in aid organizations since 1994 . The author G.A.EQBAL has completed his post graduate studies Ball State University Indiana, USA where he received his EdS degree in Education .Eqbal has worked as interpreter for OSGAP 1994, M & E Manager of CARE International in 1995-1996 and Kabul Regional Manager of AREA in 1996. .

Cover Photo: Lalla a 6th grader in Parwan